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ABSTRACT

This report provides a profile of Diablo Valley College (DVC) in California as a transfer institution. According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), DVC has been among California's top three transfer institutions for the past 4 years. The college sends more than 2,000 students a year to baccalaureate programs, and after transfer, DVC students generally do as well or slightly better than students who begin their academic careers at four-year institutions. In 1995-96, almost 40% of DVC's 436 transfers to the University of California system were minority students, and 31% of transfers to the California State University system were minorities. Reasons for DVC's success include: (1) the quality of the college's faculty; (2) strong articulation agreements with universities; (3) research on the effectiveness of the transfer programs, in which barriers to student transfer are identified and alleviated; and (4) the college's reputation, which draws serious students and encourages the partnership of four-year institutions. This document describes a number of practices in higher education institutions that lessen transfer effectiveness, and suggests ways to make them more efficient, such as developing a common course numbering system. The author states that most schools aren't as effective with transfer students as DVC, and recommends that the current system be less complicated and more attentive and encouraging to students. (EMH)

PRESENTATION ON TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION

to
LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

by

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March 25, 1999

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official OERI position or policy.**Profile of Diablo Valley College as a Transfer Institution**

Diablo Valley College (DVC) is a large suburban community college in the Bay Area, one of the three colleges which make up the Contra Costa Community College District. While DVC offers a number of strong vocational programs, many of its 21,500 students are attracted to the college because of its reputation as one of the state's most successful transfer institutions. According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), DVC has been among California's top three transfer institutions for the past four years:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Transfers to UC/CSU</u>	<u>State Ranking</u>
1993-94	1692	2
1994-95	1713	1
1995-96	1732	1
1996-97	1559	3

In terms of transfer rate, DVC is also very successful. Using the method of measuring transfer rate developed by Professor Arthur Cohen at UCLA, DVC's rate for Fall 1996 was 36.36% - half a point behind DeAnza College and approximately twice the statewide and national average.

Using a conservative estimate for transfers to private four-year colleges, DVC sends over 2,000 students a year on to baccalaureate programs, and the great majority of those students were originally ineligible for UC or CSU. After transfer, DVC students generally do as well or slightly better than students who begin their academic careers at four-year institutions.

The ethnicity of DVC's student body has been changing rapidly over the past decade. Currently, about one-third of DVC students are minority. In 1995-96, almost 40% of DVC's 436 transfers to UC were minority students, and 31% of the 1296 transfers to CSU were minority. Those figures, however, mask an under-representation of Black and Hispanic transfers.

Reasons for DVC's Success

Some would assert that DVC's success as a transfer institution is simply a matter of demographics and location. It is undeniable that our proximity to Berkeley is advantageous in many ways, but the reality is that only 10% of our transfer students actually attend Berkeley. The population of central Contra Costa County is wealthier and more highly educated than in many other areas. However, as noted above, our student body is increasingly diverse – more diverse, in fact, than the population we serve. We do not attract a greater percentage of local high school graduates than the statewide average, and the students we do attract are not necessarily better prepared. Many of our high school graduates, who in another part of the state might choose to attend a community

college, in this area choose to go directly to a four-year institution instead because of family and peer influence and because they have the resources to do so.

The reasons for DVC's success are actually more complex. The quality of DVC faculty is a critical factor, particularly in the sciences but in the rest of the core curriculum as well. The faculty assume that transfer is the goal for the majority of students and thus are scrupulous in maintaining high academic standards for their classes. Many faculty also work individually with students to encourage their transfer aspirations. In addition, DVC has put significant resources into ensuring strong and effective articulation with the universities. We have had a full-time articulation officer for many years, and our articulation agreements are both current and extensive. Representatives of four-year institutions are encouraged to visit the campus on a regular basis to meet with prospective transfers. DVC also does a good deal of research on the effectiveness of the transfer program, identifying barriers to student transfer and working to overcome them.

Also, of course, success breeds success. Students who desire to transfer are drawn to DVC because of its reputation, and that reputation probably makes four-year institutions more receptive and cooperative than they might otherwise be.

The effectiveness of existing efforts to promote transfer

I believe that existing efforts are moderately successful. Obviously, the system is working well for a large number of students. Almost 60,000 students a year transfer to UC and CSU. However, the success is not universal. Blacks and Hispanics are under-

represented in the transfer population. Moreover, a large proportion of transfer students come from a relatively small number of community colleges. For example, 28% of the community colleges account for 70% of all transfers to the UC. Also, there are a great number of students who declare transfer as a goal or who establish a "transfer intent" by enrolling in a transfer-level English course and a transfer-level math course, and yet neither transfer nor establish "transfer eligibility" (56 transferable units with a 2.0 GPA). At DVC only 50-60% of the students who establish a "transfer intent" actually achieve "transfer eligibility" within four years.

I think that efforts such as the California Articulation Number system (CAN), the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), and the many forms of "transfer agreements" or "transfer guarantees" are useful but insufficient efforts. Attempts to simplify the transfer process through CAN and IGETC took years to develop, never achieved their potential, and have tended to become more rather than less complicated over time. Transfer agreements and guarantees have waxed and waned depending on the needs of the universities and their ability to dedicate staff to those activities. Overall, the system is more complex than it needs to be, and this, combined with insufficient staff at the community colleges to identify, assist and encourage potential transfers, create a transfer process that only the strong survive.

Best practices in promoting transfer

At the state level "best practices" include all efforts to provide additional resources to encourage non-traditional students and all efforts to simplify the process. I believe that

even efforts to make the process appear simpler, such as guarantees which merely formalize existing practice, are useful in that they overcome the perception among some students that transfer is both difficult and arbitrary. Our inability to develop a "common course numbering system" even within a single segment, is hard to understand in a state where students attending multiple institutions is the rule rather than the exception. The challenge of developing such a system comprehensively is enormous, but why have we not been able to agree even on "bands" of courses (what is a 100 level course or a 200 level course) or on a few dozen lower division courses common to all institutions. Is the difference between a freshman composition course taught at two colleges significantly greater than the difference between a freshman composition course taught by two professors at the same college?

Additional resources are also necessary because many of the "best practices" which have been identified depend on increasing the amount of direct contact between faculty or support staff and students. The Puente Project is a good model. It has proven very effective in supporting the educational progress of Hispanic students. However, it requires a good deal of additional staff time to work with the students and to coordinate community mentors. Without additional resources, that time must be taken from other students with equally compelling needs. Effective transfer programs depend upon a great deal of human interaction. Students who do not believe they are "transfer material" need to be supported and encouraged in a systematic way. Community colleges simply do not have the resources to do that effectively.

At the local level, four year institutions need to provide additional staff for community college advising and recruitment and for post-transfer support services. Community colleges need to strengthen articulation and provide the sort of support network which students need, coordinating services such as counseling, advising, and financial aid. Even if our system were much less complicated than it currently is, many students would need a good deal of individual attention, encouragement and support to achieve a successful transition to a four-year institution.

Which students are best served by the current system

It seems obvious that the students who are best served are those who are best prepared – those who expect to succeed and have their own support networks. However, there are many students of equal talent, ability and promise who are not well served by the current system. These are often students who are the first in their family to attend college, who are struggling against adverse circumstances, or who have had negative educational experiences in the past. They are the ones who are most easily discouraged or “knocked off track” by requirements they weren’t familiar with, by courses which don’t transfer, by the many mysteries of the transfer system, or by the general lack of support and encouragement they encounter.